

URC WEST MIDLANDS SYNOD MISSION FUND GUIDELINES (REVISED NOVEMBER 2015)

INTRODUCTION TO THE MISSION FUND

The Synod has created a Mission fund as part of its responsibility to encourage, enable and support local Churches and partnership organisations*, in their mission activity. The fund is a resource to enable mission to develop and in particular as a financial support to Mission Pledges, the idea introduced in 2009 as part of the Vision 2020 process. This is where a church identifies one or more activities that might give (or already are giving) direction and expression to their mission priority and they make a pledge to try to achieve these mission objectives over the course of a particular period.

An initial sum of £1million over 4 years has been made available from 2010. The scheme will be funded using a proportion of current and future sale proceeds from redundant Church buildings.

AIM

To assist local Churches in projects which enable them to make and enact mission pledges.

CRITERIA

Vision 2020 is about prioritising for the future. At its centre are ten statements of the United Reformed Church's mission purpose which describe the denomination we hope to become.

1. Spirituality and prayer- growth in the practice of prayer and spirituality.
2. Identity- every local church being able to say who they are, what they do and why they do it.
3. Christian ecumenical partnerships-having confidence in our identity and the treasures of our tradition and discerning when to seek ecumenical partnerships and further unity of the church.
4. Community partnerships-a church more active in the local neighbourhood.
5. Diversity-increasing our welcoming all all people equally.
6. Evangelism-proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God with more confidence.
7. Church growth-a growing church with an increasing membership.
8. Global partnerships-an active partner in God's global mission with other churches around the world.
9. Justice- keeping faith with the poor and challenging injustice.
10. Integrity of creation-safeguarding the integrity of creation to sustain and renew the face of the earth.

The above statements complement and incorporate the 5 Marks of Mission:

- to proclaim the good news of the kingdom;
- to teach, baptise and nurture new believers;
- to respond to human need by loving service;
- to seek to transform unjust structures of society;
- to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

The synod has adopted and adapted these statements for its own mission strategy a copy of which is available from the synod office.

Churches are expected to demonstrate how their project sits within one or more of the United Reformed Church's 10 statements of mission purposes and indicate what is the nature of their Church's mission pledge that the project fulfils. This will be a measure for all applications.

SCOPE OF THE FUND

The fund is primarily for 'seed sowing' i.e. will support start up costs for up to 3 years, with the expectation that the work will continue beyond that period. Churches must be able to demonstrate a robust funding strategy for how they intend to fund the proposed project beyond the initial 3 year period and will be expected to demonstrate fund raising activity within their end of year one report. Further applications beyond the period of 3 years **may be** considered in **exceptional circumstances** but any further grants awarded will be at a reduced level of up to a maximum of 25% of the projected budget.

Projects must demonstrate clarity of vision, an understanding of the mission implications of the work planned and how it will strengthen and extend the life of the local church.

Churches will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the people they intend to reach out to or work with, and how they will provide committed and effective leadership and staff or volunteers to run the project.

Churches must be able to demonstrate the proposed project is the desire of the whole local congregation and is celebrated as part of the whole mission strategy of the local church. If funding is awarded the church must be able to show that the whole congregation remains 'on board' with project and that any discontent with the direction the project is headed is recorded accurately in reports to the synod mission fund panel.

As a general guideline, whilst all churches that make an application for support from the Synod will be expected to indicate something of their Church's overall mission strategy - to successfully gain support from the Mission Fund there should be a clear and direct link between a particular piece of mission strategy and the proposed expenditure. That is to say a mission reason and ideally one with an element of 'seed sowing'.

Grants will normally be awarded for not more than 50% of project costs (20% for capital projects). Grants will not normally be considered for building/maintenance projects however grants will be considered for new buildings. All building/maintenance projects should be sent to the Property Committee for consideration. The remaining funding should be identified by the applicant and can include local church funds (available funds, voluntary efforts, fundraising etc), or grants from other partners/organisations.

The church is encouraged to register with funding central www.fundingcentral.org.uk to find grant awarding bodies in addition to applying to the Mission Fund.

Applications can be for one off projects or spread over one, two or three years. A maximum grant of £25,000 per annum per church is available. In order to ensure that funds are distributed as widely as possible we would normally not consider an application from a church within two years of the expiry of an existing or previous award

Churches will be expected to demonstrate that they have engaged and worked with Area Ministers in the development of the Mission Fund application. No Mission Fund application will be considered without a covering letter from the Area Minister.

GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC CATEGORIES OF EXPENDITURE

Employment of Staff

For applications involving the employment of staff, a copy of the job description, person specification and details of how the person will be recruited, will be required. A management committee, overseeing the post will need to be in place.

Capital expenditure

Projects which involve alterations to buildings will be considered and expenditure relating to capital works and fixed installations will qualify for grants of up to 20%. Equipment, staff and voluntary time will qualify for grants of up to 50%. The value of volunteer time is limited 50% of the churches' monetary contribution to the project; the application would have to describe the method for recording and valuing volunteer time.

Applications will need to demonstrate the necessity of the capital expenditure in achieving the mission project objectives. Property alterations will need approval of the Synod Property Committee and List Buildings Advisory Committee as appropriate.

Example

Provision of a weekly lunch club for the local elderly

Costs

Refurbishment of kitchen and installation of disabled toilet £20,000 - 20% grant

Kitchen Equipment and utensils £5,000 - 50% grant

Cooks salary per annum £3,000 – 50% grant

Volunteer time per annum 3 hours per week x 5 people at £6.19 per hour £4,800 – this could be considered as a contribution from the applying church - 50% grant.

Total costs incurred Year 1 £32,800 - maximum grant £10,400

Year 2 £7,800 - maximum grant £3,900

Year 3 £7,800 - maximum grant £3,900

ADMINISTRATION

The fund is administered by a panel appointed by Synod Mission Council and consists of representatives from the Synod Mission Council, the Pastoral and the Finance Committees. The panel will assess applications and award grants based on the above criteria. Support in filling in the forms can be given by the Synod's Finance Officer or if needed, by members of the applications board with whom the Finance Officer will be in touch.

Grants will be administered by the Synod Office.

Applications are reviewed four times a year, usually in January, April, July and October.

To allow for sufficient assessment of applications, submission should be made one month before the date of the meeting. Applicants who wish to make a presentation to the panel should indicate this in the application.

Successful applicants should provide an annual report which should include the following:-

- a financial summary detailing how the funds have been used.
- a summary of the outcomes and what has been achieved measured against the plans and expectations for the project.
- an indication of how the project will be sustained beyond the current period of funding.

**Partnership/related organisations may include initiatives with other denominations for a joint activity e.g. Food bank, Street Pastors*

Small Grants

It is recognised that some churches could be deterred from applying for a Mission Grant by the need to finance directly or undertake fundraising for 50% of project costs. In order to address this it is proposed to offer **up to** 100% grants for the following circumstances:

Grants are limited to £1000 each

The church must have fewer than 25 members and not have reserves in excess of immediate needs

The church has taken all reasonable steps to be compliant with their M&M obligation and be up to date with their accounts, which must be submitted as part of the application.

Such grants may support the continuation of an existing mission project which might otherwise cease

Such grants are limited to a total of £10,000 per year